

# The Management of Children



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An eminent teacher of this Province is said to have begun the work of each school day with a prayer to Deity, that he should receive Divine assistance in the difficult task of discipline. Discipline is the supposed premiss of all school work. Though it does not appear on the time table, yet without it no time table—no part of any time table—can be effectively carried out. By its influence the pupils become accustomed to order, to obedience and to application, which are so necessary to the success of teaching. In short, discipline is the necessary preliminary and accompaniment of all instruction and of all character building. No form of corporate or social life can exist which does not presuppose the discipline of the members composing such society or corporation.

The discipline of a school, however, differs from that of a city, a society or a state, in the fact that those who compose a school are for the most part immature and have had no voice in framing its laws. They have not joined the school of their own deliberate choice, nor have they the power of withdrawing themselves at will. It follows, therefore, that the government of a school must be patriarchal, not democratic. There must be one person in whom the government of this patriarchal community is invested—the teacher or head-master whose authority is or should be supreme throughout his dominions in all matters.

The lesson of obedience is one that many children learn before coming to school; still more, unfortunately, do not. The primary function of the school, therefore, is to enforce the lesson of obedience, for I take it not to be the sole business of the school to instruct the rising generation, but to train them in that respect for constituted authority which is necessary to prepare them as citizens for the duties they may be called upon to discharge in the city, state or church.

This is the real reason why "Every Principal or Head Master must be captain on his own quarter deck," and why the same is true of each assistant teacher in his or her class room. No matter how democratic a people may be, its schools cannot be democratized in their government, if they are really to prepare for democratic life; for democracy presupposes a compelling respect for law, and respect for law does not come by nature. "It must therefore be superimposed on nature by habit, and right habit is a matter of enforcement and a matter of time." These reasons therefore are quite sufficient to justify teachers in claiming a measure of strong and unquestioned authority over their half-fledged citizens, which would undoubtedly be arbitrary and insufferable if granted to any other authority in dealing with adults.

Hence it is that the school regulations give a teacher the right to extend his authority outside the school-house and to hold pupils to account for their conduct on the way to and from school, except when accompanied by parent or guardian, and to require of them abstinence from certain habits, such as smoking, which undoubtedly injure the good name of the school and serve as a bad example to the other pupils.

No school can effectively train for self government that does not train its juniors to obedience and inspire the senior pupils with a sense of responsibility. This is the sort of school which a stable democracy requires.

I have thought it well to dwell at some length on what may be termed the sanctions of authority, because the spirit of the age seems to be tending in the opposite direction. The old-fashioned strictness of the home has vanished, and youngsters learn at a very early age to exalt the horn of their own self-will and to dominate their parents. It may be that under the old rule there was too much severity and too little kindness, that the hand of authority rested too heavily on the young child, and that punishment filled too large a place in both home and school. No person familiar with the works of Dickens or Lamb can fail to know what the old-fashioned dominie was like. It may be truthfully stated that the sceptre of his kingdom was the birch rod.

But there appeared about a century ago prophets of a new dispensation. Their doctrine was that knowledge must be made attractive, that education should be made easy and inviting, and that teachers as well as parents should govern solely by kindness.

The boldest of these innovators was Jean Jacques Rousseau, who actually proposed the abrogation of

authority and argued that children should be governed by allowing them to have their own way. Educationists of this stamp would subordinate the system to the child; they regard the faults of the child as due to anything and everything rather than to the child himself. They hold that the source of evil must be found without, and not within, and scout implicit obedience as an unintelligent process, fatal to individuality, reducing the human being to the level of a machine.

Is the pupil inattentive? Then it is the teacher's fault because the lesson is dull. If a boy does wrong, he is, after all, what circumstances have made him, and he cannot be held responsible for circumstances; in short, as President Draper pithily says:—"The Children used to sit at the feet of the teacher; now the teacher sits at the feet of the children."

All this represents an inevitable reaction against the old school of

"Qui, quae, quod.  
Fetch me the rod."

No one need shed tears over the demise of the old teachers, whose favorite colours were black and blue, but the reaction from undue strictness, though based on a right principle, needs to be carefully watched, lest undue softness prevail in the management of the school. While the teachers of fifty or more years ago had to be reminded that "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," there are some well meaning, progressive and vigorous teachers who must be told that "All play and no work makes Jack a mere toy."

As an illustration I may be allowed to quote a selection from Dr. Louis Soldan's book, "The Century and the School."

In the Chapter on "Fads," he describes a visit paid to a room in a large school. The morning began with what is called "observation lesson." The children were encouraged to relate what they thought noteworthy of their experience of the previous evening. One of the children related that they had an evening party at home; that they lived upstairs, and that they had carried up two kegs of beer; that when they were through with this, they had carried up a keg of whiskey. They had a fine time.

At this stage the teacher wisely said: "Now we shall hear from some of the other children." The second series of exercises consisted of games fashioned somewhat after the Kindergarten games. The next was the naming of classic pictures. The next exercise was one in posing, the children imitating by the way they stood, certain pictures which

they had seen. Thus one boy stepped forward, looked about for some object, took hold of a feather duster, and leaning on it, one end of it on the floor, he looked up with a set expression on his face. The class shouted "The man with the hoe!"

The next exercise was called "Rhythmic Movement." Ten children danced the Virginia Reel and eight children the Lancers.

Dr. Soldan then somewhat quaintly observes after the visitor had left, the rest of the day was given to the traditional subjects of the school. He also reminds his readers that this was a report of an actually observed morning.

While the illustration quoted above exhibits in rather a striking light the outcome of the doctrine that education should be made easy and inviting, I hope that no teacher present today may be ever misled so far as to believe that work of this kind is really educative. Remember that reactions usually overdo themselves and defeat their own purposes. It is not right that a child's school life should be all gall and wormwood, but neither is it right that it should be all cakes and ale. This world is not altogether a pleasant place to live in, nor can school be made a delightful pastime, or education wholly easy and agreeable. I feel no hesitation in saying as emphatically as I can that many of the modern notions in regard to the training of children are utterly false. Children cannot be brought up in the way they should go, simply by pleasing them. Pestalozzi, one of the revolutionists of the 18th century, was wiser than to think so. Speaking of always giving instruction in the guise of amusement, he says: "I am convinced that such a notion will forever preclude solidity of knowledge, and from want of sufficient exertions on the part of the pupils, will lead to that very result which I wish to avoid by my principle of a constant employment of the thinking powers. A child must very early in life be taught the lesson that exertion is indispensable for the attainment of knowledge."

Listen also to the words of John Stuart Mill, the most acute thinker of his time: "A pupil from whom nothing is ever demanded which he cannot do, never does all he can. I do not believe that boys can be induced to apply themselves with vigor, and what is so much more difficult, perseverance, to dry and irksome studies by the sole force of persuasion and soft words. It is no doubt a very laudable effort in modern teaching to render as much as possible of what the young are required to learn, easy and interesting to them. But when this principle is pushed to the length of not requiring them to learn anything but what has been made easy and in-



teresting, one of the chief objects of education is sacrificed."

Everyone, I feel sure, rejoices in the decline of the old tyrannical system of teaching, but it must be admitted, however, that it did succeed in enforcing habits of application and concentration. The new, on the other hand, seems to be training up a race of men who will be incapable of doing anything which is disagreeable to them. There is drudgery in every life that is worth living, and happy is the person who has learned not to shirk it. "Make work pleasurable," say its advocates, "and faults will not occur, punishments will be unnecessary." But they forget that in school, as in the world, uninteresting work must sometimes be done and that it is most important to acquire the art of doing uninteresting work in a serious and determined way. It is not hard to make work interesting, but to make French or Latin more interesting than hockey or football is not easy when handling schoolboys full of animal spirits. Even a teacher of the highest genius can hardly make either mathematics or the languages a thrilling drama, nor can any amount of invention in a parent make every duty an agreeable pastime. It must, I admit, be confessed that those children become the most useful and the strongest in character, who do a great many things simply because they must.

Much has been said and is still being said of teaching by example, and perhaps it is not easy to overestimate the power of imitation in education. It must be confessed, however, that this principle has its limits. How many girls, think you, will form the habit of mopping up the floor soiling the knives, cleaning the spoons, or making beds simply from seeing their mothers perform this work? How many boys have you seen who learned by imitation to weed the garden beds, to pick up small stones in the meadow, or handle the buck-raw? It may be said without any exaggeration that the ordinary boy or girl will grow up in indolence if left to form useful habits by imitation. The ordinary child is sure to shirk those duties that he regards as unpleasant, if he is not followed up by the firm hand of authority. An old myth states that at the sound of Orpheus' lyre the "Argo" glided into the sea, the Argonauts turned aside from the pleasures of Lemnos, and the dragon of Colchis was lulled to sleep, and also at the sound of Amphion's, the stones moved into their places and formed the walls of Thebes, but I cannot think that either poetry by its charm or music by its magical spell will delude children into believing for any length of time that work is play.

To get children to do their duty, they must be put at it, and kept at it until habits of thinking and acting are formed and character is fixed. I have little sympathy with those who desire to substitute an education of interest for an education of effort, as interest cannot always be maintained at the bursting point and the child if left to himself is sure to run to waste; only effort can save him.

I am not speaking here of the extraordinary child whom we see now and then developing into strong manhood and womanhood under the most adverse circumstances, but of the ordinary child, who is just as lazy as he dares be and who will never form correct habits and build solid character unless wisely and firmly directed.

The present age, moreover, is an age of effort, work and labour. The activity of the school should therefore be directed towards a twofold task—the imparting of knowledge and the formation of a habit of unremitting, steady industry. No principle needs more thorough inculcation than this—"I will do what I ought to do." The gift of the school to the young should be not only skill in his work, but also love for labour and activity, if he is to find satisfaction and happiness in life. But here someone may say that too much is often expected of the teacher, that he cannot as a rule create habits of industry, application, and self-control—these must begin at home. Then again, quite a number of children will be slow—not to say dunces; and even the most competent and faithful instructors cannot properly train the majority of the rest, unless their efforts are vigorously and intelligently seconded by the home.

The following amusing anecdote is taken from the work of a recent writer on education and serves to illustrate how some parents would be willing to do their duty by their children, if they could only do so by the payment of money. An old farmer in Pennsylvania, having suddenly acquired a fortune by operations in the oil region, sent his two daughters to be educated at a boarding school. After a time he wrote the Principal a letter, enquiring about the progress of his children. "Nothing can be done for your daughters," replied the Principal, "they lack capacity." "Then buy capacity for them at any price," was his reply, "and send the bill to me." Though such an answer seems extremely absurd and ridiculous, yet it is hardly more so than are the remarks of many persons whose intelligence far exceeds that possessed by the Pennsylvania farmer. Such persons are often heard to say: "My boy's teacher lacks tact;" "He doesn't make the lesson attractive and interesting;" "He doesn't succeed in

getting the goodwill of the children." I am often compelled to listen to remarks similar to these, made by parents who seem to think that the teacher's duty is to create habits of study and even supply brains. These parents should be made to feel that the words of the Prophet Isaiah are as applicable to the home as to the school: "There must be precept upon precept; line upon line, here a little and there a little."

In a previous part of this paper allusion was made to the fact that Rousseau, a French writer on education of the 18th century, actually argued that children should be governed by letting them have their own way. Perhaps the United States has seen the fullest development of the Rousseau theory in education, but even in our own Canada advocates of this nonsensical idea have appeared from time to time. Yet warning voices have come from the States, showing the evil effects of this doctrine in the practice of the schools. In the Mosely Commission Professor Armstrong reports that everywhere the Principals of High Schools and Academies complain of the inability of their pupils to concentrate their attention. The Commandant of the school ship "Saratoga" states that, "Not a single boy who entered the Pennsylvania Nautical School had apparently ever obeyed an order before in his whole life." President Eliot also complains that the respect in which Legislatures and the Courts are held has unquestionably declined. Such warnings should not be lost on the teachers and educational authorities of Canada; for it is much easier to relax the reins of discipline than it is to tighten them.

Permit me now to give you an account of the practical operation of Rousseau's idea, or ideas similar to his, in the schoolroom. The account is taken from William Chandler Bagley's work entitled "Craftsmanship in Teaching," a most suggestive and interesting book. Professor Bagley, in describing his visit to a certain school, said he learned of it through a resident of the city in which it was located, who was delivering an address before an educational gathering on the problems of modern education. The speaker told his audience that in the schools of this enlightened city, the antiquated notions that were so pernicious had been entirely dispensed with; that pupils in these schools were no longer repressed; that all line passing, static posture, and other barbaric practices had been abolished; that the pupils were free to realize themselves, through all forms of constructive activity; that drill had been eliminated; that all was harmony, and love, and freedom, and spontaneity.



"My interest was so excited by this glowing picture," says Prof. Bagley, "that I became more and more convinced that the problem of government had at last been solved in the schools of this city, and so I took the earliest opportunity to pay them a visit. On reaching the city I went at once to the Superintendent's office and he directed me to one of the largest schools. On arriving at the building, I felt sure that recess was in progress and that it was being celebrated within doors. After dodging about the corridors for a time, I at last located the Principal to whom I introduced myself and asked if I might visit his school after recess was over. 'There are no recesses here,' he said: (I could barely hear him through the din) 'this is merely a relaxation period for some of the classes.' I then asked him if he agreed with the doctrines that the system represented, and if he followed them consistently in the work of the school. He told me he believed in them implicitly and followed them to the letter.

"We then visited several class-rooms, where I saw children realizing themselves very effectively. Three groups were at work in each room. One recited, another studied at their seats, a third did construction work at the tables. On enquiring about the mechanics of this rather elaborate organization, I was told that mechanics had been eliminated from this school, as mechanical organization of the classroom represses the child's activity, crushes his spontaneity, and prevents the effective operation of the principle of self-realization. How then did these three groups exchange places, for I felt that the doctrine of self-realization would not permit them to remain at the same work during the entire session. 'Oh,' replied the Principal, 'when they get ready to change, they just change, that's all.' Seeing that a change was coming directly, I waited to watch it. The group had been working with what I should call a great deal of noise and confusion. All at once this increased tenfold. Pupils jumped over seats, ran into each other in the aisles, scampered from this place to that, while the teacher stood in the front of the room wildly waving her arms. The performance lasted for several minutes. 'There's spontaneity for you,' shouted the Principal above the din. I acquiesced by a nod of the head, as my lungs, through lack of training, were quite unequal to such an emergency as this.

"I then passed to another room where the same group system was in evidence. Noticing pupils, who had been working at their seats, suddenly put away their books and papers and skip over to the con-

struction table. I enquired about the nature of the construction work. 'We use it,' said the Principal, 'as a reward for good work in the book subjects. Arithmetic is dead and dry. Pupils must have an incentive to master it. We make the privileges of the construction table the incentive.' 'What do they make at this table?' I asked. 'Whatever their fancy dictates,' he replied. Being a little curious, however, to know how it all came out, I waited until I saw a child start to work on a basket, work at it a few minutes, then take up something else, continue a little time, go back to the basket, and finally throw both down for a third object of self-realization. 'How then,' I asked, 'do you get the beautiful results that you exhibit?' 'For those,' he replied, 'we just keep the pupils working on one thing until it is finished.' 'But,' I objected, 'is that consistent with the doctrine of spontaneity?' His answer was lost in the din of a change of groups, and I did not follow the investigation further.

"Noon dismissal being now due, I went into the corridor. Lines are forbidden in that school. At the stroke of the bell, the classroom doors burst open and bedlam was let loose. Anticipating what was coming, I hurriedly betook myself to an alcove, where I saw mere spontaneity in two minutes than I had ever seen before in my life. One group stopped in front of my alcove, and showed commendable curiosity about the visitor in their midst. After exhausting his static possibilities, they tempted him to dynamic re-action by making faces; but this proving to be of no avail, they went on their way, in the hope, doubtless, of realizing themselves elsewhere.

"Before leaving that school I took occasion to enquire concerning the effect of such a system upon the teachers. I led up to it by asking the Principal if there were any nervous or anaemic children in his school. 'Not one,' he replied enthusiastically, 'our system eliminates them.' 'How about the teachers?' I ventured to remark, having in mind the image of a distracted young woman whom I had seen attempting to reduce forty little ruffians to some semblance of law and order through moral suasion. If I judged conditions correctly, that woman was on the verge of a nervous collapse. My guide became confidential when I made this enquiry. 'To tell the truth,' he whispered, 'the system is mighty hard on the women!'"

What has been said in this address is not said for the purpose of decrying the educational policy of those who today insist that school work should be made as simple and attractive as possible. What I do seek to counteract is the mischievous ideas of those who look at matters from the other side, and

who maintain so vigorously and so constantly that we should never ask or urge the child to do something which is not easy and attractive or which he does not like.

"The important lesson which we must teach the child," says Prof. Bagley, "is the lesson of achievement itself—the supreme lesson wrung from human experience—the lesson, namely, that every advance the world has made, every step it has taken forward, every increment that has added to the sum total of progress has been attained at the price of self-sacrifice and effort and struggle—at the price of doing things that one does not want to do."

N. B.—The writer wishes to express his indebtedness, for some of the thoughts on discipline, to the admirable paper on that subject by Dr. J. L. Paton, formerly Head Master of the Manchester Grammar School.



